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A United Voice, A Time to Act

As public school employees we are deeply committed to the success of every student. Students are at the center of everything we do.

Taking an active role in your local, state and national union is another critical part of this unending commitment to our students.

Welcome! We're happy you're here for the start of another school year, and would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your choice to be part of Florida's public schools.

Take pride in the fact that you are doing great work — some of the most important work there is. As teachers and education staff professionals, we are focused every day on improving the lives of our students. Your work helps build a better future for us all.

While we celebrate the contributions of each member of the great educational village, we can build even stronger schools together.

That's where the Florida Education Association (FEA) comes in. The information in this booklet will help you learn more about your local union and the FEA — and why becoming an active member is an important part of your personal and our collective success.

Statewide, our members are advocating for and shining a light on the needs of public education through the Fund Our Future campaign. United, we will bring about positive change for public schools, for our students and for everyone who has dedicated their professional lives to educating young people. (See page 4.)

FEA is made up of 145,000 teachers, education staff professionals, higher education faculty and graduate assistants, students and retirees dedicated to providing the best possible education for students in Florida's public schools.

As union members, we are united by:

- **Power:** We are many, and we are strong. FEA locals throughout the state have demonstrated that great things can be achieved when we come together to take collective action. (See page 7.)
- **Purpose:** Whether we drive a bus, teach science, serve meals or counsel children, we are all part of a great

Mark your calendar!

The start of any new school year is always a busy time. To help out, here are a few reminders for every educator's to-do list.

As a professional educator you know the value of collaboration, so team up with a colleague on these critical activities. >>>>



Attend your local union meeting.

Your union is your professional organization. Taking an active role connects with other dedicated educators in your county and across the state. *Ask your building representative when your local meets.*



Get up to \$20,000 in no-cost life insurance.

New members are eligible to sign-up for two different complimentary life insurance policies from AFT (\$5,000) and NEA (\$15,000). *See page 22.*



Explore your professional development options.

FEA and your local union have a full range of relevant, development offerings. *See pages 12-14* for resources available for teachers and education staff professionals.

educational village, with students at the center of everything we do. (See page 15.)

- **Potential:** Public education in this state faces numerous problems, with insufficient funding and a lack of resources at the top of the list. With our voices and our votes, we can shape the face of public education in Florida, ensuring a brighter future for our students, schools and educators. (See page 24.)

When we combine our power, purpose and potential we are strong. And our students and parents depend on us to use that strength to protect and improve Florida's public schools.

Speaking with a collective voice, we call for the resources and autonomy needed to unlock every student's full potential; we fight for fair wages, affordable health-care and retirement security; we strive to protect academic freedom and demand respect and dignity for all educators.

For these and so many reasons, your membership matters. Your local union and FEA give you the ability to grow as a professional, and to make an even greater impact on the lives of students and at your school. Together, we will stand up and speak for our students, schools and educators.

We're all looking forward to another great school year. Let's get to work — together!



Fedrick Ingram
President



Andrew Spar
Vice President



Carole Gauronskas
Secretary-Treasurer



Register for money-saving discounts.

With the holidays just around the corner, make the most of your gift dollars by using one of the many discounts available through FEA's member benefits programs.

[See page 21.](#)



Get ready for the 2020 legislative session.

The 2020 legislative session runs from January 14 to March 13. Stay informed and take action by reading FEA's Frontline Blog before, during and after session:

www.feaweb.org/news/frontline



Vote in the March 17 Florida Presidential Primary election.

Elections matter, from the schoolhouse to the state house to the White House. The Florida Presidential Primary will help determine our choices in the November 2020 Presidential Election.

[See page 24.](#)



Plan the next phase of your professional journey

FEA has resources for retiring, non-renewed or laid-off educators. Our national affiliates have programs to help members tackle student loan debt. [See page 23.](#)



Plan ahead for the critical fall 2020 elections.

The back-to-school rush is a busy time for educators. Plan ahead for the critical August primary election by requesting a mail ballot and making sure your registration is up-to-date. www.feaweb.org/member-center/voter-toolkit

Fund Our Future

Florida Education Association members spent the spring calling on lawmakers to fully fund our public schools so they can best help the students they serve reach their full potential.

When somebody asks “what does your union do?” you can tell them — proudly — that we stand up for our students, for our schools and for our colleagues. We are the voice of public education, and we stand up for the future of Florida and all of this state’s children.

We stand united, and our message to state leaders is loud and clear: Fund Our Future.

Since the launch this January of the multi-year “Fund Our Future” campaign, FEA members have been speaking out and taking action to convince lawmakers to invest in our students, public schools and all the people who keep those schools running — the great educational village (see page 15).

Working together, we have scored notable victories — but there is much to be done.

We have the power to create change

While efforts to defund public education and privatize Florida’s schools — at the expense of our students — continue, something in the educational landscape has changed.

We have.

Members have re-discovered our power to organize, take collective action and move the needle for our public schools.

United in support of the Fund Our Future campaign, thousands of members have

risen up over the past year to advocate for our students, public schools and educators. They have been joined by parents, faith leaders and others in our communities who support public schools. Here is just some of what FEA members like you accomplished this spring:

► **Fund Our Future Day of Action:** Local unions in 61 counties organized events for a March 4 Day of Action coinciding with the start of the legislative session. More than 3,500 teachers and education staff professionals participated in rallies, sign waving and informational pickets.

“We are united in delivering one message,” FEA President Fedrick Ingram said on the eve of the session. “State leaders must fund our future. They must invest in neighborhood public schools, invest in the success of our students, and invest in the teachers and staff who work in our schools.”

► **Members Make a Difference in Tallahassee:** Each week during the 2019 legislative session, members traveled from their districts to lobby lawmakers on behalf of their students and schools. In districts throughout the state, local union members also reached out to their communities to talk about the need to fund our future.



- **Statewide Walk-ins:** On April 17, while budget negotiations continued in Tallahassee, teachers and school staff joined with parents and community allies for morning walk-ins at more than 300 schools in 41 counties, from Pensacola to Key West. The statewide event was to demonstrate the broad, unyielding support for our students, educators and public schools.

We can be certain that our voices were heard by the Legislature. Where schools saw an paltry 47-cent-per-student increase in base funding of for the 2018-2019 budget year, the increase to the base student allocation (BSA) stands at \$75 per student in the 2019-2020 budget. The increased dollars will give districts more money to properly fund schools and salaries.

- **Education Summit:** Nearly 1,000 educators, parents and community members united in Orlando on May 18 for “Bringing Voices Together: An Education Summit for Florida’s Public Schools.”

“We see this summit as the start of something big, a real grassroots movement that brings together many disparate voices for our schools,” President Ingram said in his opening remarks.

“Along with the majority of people in Florida, we believe that public education is a fundamental good for this state and for the nation as a whole. But our neighborhood public schools



are under attack — there’s no other way to describe it. If public education is going to have a future in Florida, it’s time for the people who care about our public schools to step forward and take control of the conversation.”

Why ‘Fund Our Future’? Because our students deserve better

The vital need for the Fund Our Future campaign is no secret: Florida has been falling down on the job for its kids for more than two decades. Statistics and rankings tell the story that our members experience each and every day:

- Florida ranks among the bottom 10 states nationally in funding for our students.
- Florida ranks No. 1 among states in the decline of K-12 funding since 2008, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Many school staff earn a wage below the federal poverty line.

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FUND OUR FUTURE is the Florida Education Association’s ongoing state-wide campaign, launched in 2019, to advocate for and shine a light on the needs of Florida’s public school students, neighborhood public schools and educators.

FEA’s 2019 legislative agenda was guided by the goals set out for Fund Our Future, and those same goals drive our agenda today and into 2020.

The Fund Our Future campaign seeks state investment in:

- **Student success**, with goals such as ensuring safe learning environments, providing needed services, reducing class sizes, and prioritizing real learning over rote learning and high-stakes testing.
- **Our public schools**, in order to raise per-pupil spending to at least the

national average, pay for initiatives mandated by the Legislature, and provide fair funding for districts and competitive salaries for our educators.

- **Retention and recruitment**, so that school districts can attract and keep the qualified teachers and staff who are fundamental to student success and achievement.

- ▶ Florida's teachers are among the lowest paid in this country, with the average salary ranking 46th in the nation.
- ▶ Florida's average teacher salary is more than \$12,000 below the national average. Average salaries are \$8,000 higher in Georgia and \$2,400 higher in Alabama.
- ▶ We face a growing teacher shortage. More than 4,000 classrooms were without a qualified teacher in August 2018, at the start of last school year.
- ▶ The Florida Department of Education (DOE) projects 10,000 vacancies — that's 10,000 classrooms without a qualified teacher.

To our state's failure to properly fund public education, add issues such as:

- ▶ Out-of-control, high-stakes testing that eats up a big chunk of time that could be better spent in real teaching and learning.
- ▶ A punitive and counterproductive system of grading our schools.
- ▶ A reliance on bonus schemes rather than fair, competitive salaries for teachers and education staff professionals.

Sometimes it seems as if politicians are deliberately undermining the success of our students and our neighborhood public schools.

Throughout recent decades, powerful lawmakers have promoted policies that favor for-profit charter school operators and private and religious schools while simultaneously diverting funding from our neighborhood public schools.

In the 2019 legislative session, they created a new voucher program that may, over five years, take nearly a billion dollars directly from the general revenue funds that support public education. That's money straight out of the pockets of our neighborhood public schools. Lawmakers also opened up the door for a massive

expansion of charter schools, whether local districts agree to host those schools or not.



Become part of the movement for our public schools

We, Florida's teachers, education staff professionals, higher education faculty and graduate assistants, parents and other community members, are the ones that can — that will — change all of this.

And our voices are getting louder all the time. The #FundOurFutureFL campaign has become part of a nationwide movement.

Join us! Each and every one of us is needed in the fight for our public schools.

You help bring our schools' needs to the forefront of state budget and policy discussions whenever you come out for an event wearing #Red4Ed, or share your views on public education with a neighbor or political leader, or recruit a friend or acquaintance to the cause of public education, or participate in an informational picket, school walk-in or rally. Together, we have the power to bring about positive change for public education.



www.feaweb.org/issues-action

Sign up today for action alerts and learn more about Fund Our Future at FEA's new and improved website.

As members of the Florida Education Association, we believe in the power of public education to transform young lives and help this state build a brighter future. We believe that public education is a fundamental good that not only lifts up our children but essentially binds together this great nation.

"Our public schools offer a child who comes from nothing the opportunity to become something — to go from poverty to great success in life," said FEA President Fedrick Ingram.

COLLECTIVE ACTION | There are two kinds of power: organized money and organized people. Organized money has been going after public education for nearly three decades. We have to change that; we can change that. Being active in your local union answers the question, “What can we do about it?” When we band together in numbers too great to ignore, we ensure our students have the vibrant classrooms, safe schools and bright futures they deserve.

This past school year, FEA locals all across the state demonstrated the power of collective action by standing up for their students and public education. Here are just a few examples:

Fighting Privatization: As soon as the Hillsborough County School Board put out an Request for Proposal (RFP) to privatize custodial jobs this past Spring, members of the Hillsborough School Employees Federation (HSEF) took action. Organizing rallies at school board meetings and garnering public support, members of the HSEF pushed back against the attempt to privatize custodians. In response the school board and superintendent have committed to centralizing custodial services instead of privatizing them. HSEF members will continue their organizing activities to make sure the district keeps its word.



board had not yet ruled on whether or not to accept the magistrate’s decision. Regardless of how the board rules, it is clear that educators in Brevard have used collective action to change the public narrative and are poised to make educator pay a central part of school board elections in 2020.

Voters Support Public Ed: Recent elections tell us that putting education funding on the ballot is a winning strategy. Educators from coast-to-coast will see increased pay in the 2019-20 school year due to local tax referendums passed in recent elections. Currently 21 counties — *representing more than 52% of all of Florida’s public-school students* — have passed a referendum to fund their schools. While there is no excusing the lack of education funding from Tallahassee, these victories at the ballot box serve as a testament to the power that can be wielded when members unite and engage with the community to fight for positive change.

FEA members know collective action works because they’ve seen it happen.



Organizing For Fair Educator Pay: On the other side of the state, the Brevard Federation of Teachers (BFT) has been engaged in a year-long battle that led to impasse over salary negotiations. BFT, too, has garnered public support by being very visible at school board meetings and in the press. In fact, when the Special Magistrate rendered his decision agreeing with BFT’s position on salary the local paper wrote an editorial in which they declared, “It’s time Brevard Public Schools stop kicking the can down the road” and raise teacher pay. As of the print deadline, the Brevard school

FEA members in action:
(Left) Hillsborough School Employees Federation and community members demonstrate outside the district office. (Top) Brevard Federation of Teachers held a series of public actions as part of their contract negotiations. (Bottom) Palm Beach County educators and community members rally to protect their locally-passed school funding referendum, which got more than 70% of the vote in 2018.

FEA Spotlight

POWER

Your Union

Building community:
Your union is a member-
driven professional
organization that brings
together teachers
and education staff
professionals like you
looking to grow
as educators. Members
learn from and support
one another.

Your union starts with you.

For many of us education isn't just a job — it's a calling. Becoming a member of your union is a foundational part of your drive for professional excellence.

As a professional educator dedicated to the future of public schools, you demand the most of yourself, your colleagues and your profession. Your passion and commitment make a difference.

You work every day to improve the lives of the students you serve and to help them reach their full potential.

You're a year-round advocate for your students, your school, your co-workers and your state.

Four million members like you make up the local, state and national organizations you are become a part of by joining your local union. But it all starts with you.



You've joined your local union to take ownership of your profession and have a voice in the decisions that affect your career.

Your local union is made up of talented, passionate and devoted public school teachers and education staff professionals — just like you.

It is a grassroots organization run by and for its members — who work collectively to make sure every student has access to high-quality public education.



Your local union is one of more than 100 local groups from Pensacola to Key West that make up the FEA.

Founded in 1886, the Florida Education Association is now the largest union in the state of Florida representing 145,000 teachers, education staff professionals, higher education faculty, graduate assistants, education students and retired educators.

FEA is proud to be your statewide union. Together we are the strongest voice for quality public education in Florida.



Florida is one of five “merged” states, meaning that FEA members belong to — and benefit from the combined resources of — both national education unions, with a combined membership of 4 million educators.

The American Federation of Teachers was founded in 1916 and today represents 1.6 million members in more than 3,000 local affiliates nationwide.

The National Education Association (NEA), the nation's largest professional employee organization, has 3 million members and affiliate organizations in every state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States.



Unity and solidarity! AFT, FEA and FEA-affiliated local unions are part of national, state and regional labor federations.

The AFL-CIO is the umbrella federation for unions in the U.S., with 56 unions representing 12.5 million working men and women. The Florida AFL-CIO unites approximately 500 local unions and labor councils, representing more than 900,000 workers, retirees and their families. Most FEA-affiliated local unions are also part of one of nine Central Labor Councils throughout Florida — regional bodies that connect workers from different trades, workplaces and cities.

What we accomplish by working together

Acting alone we can only do so much. But being active and engaged in your union gives you a powerful, collective voice about the future of teaching and learning. We know that we can affect real change when we come together and take collective action. Below are just a few key ways union members work together to ensure opportunity, success and quality public education for our students.

Collective bargaining

From wages to health insurance, performance pay to evaluations, nearly every part of our work lives is covered by the contract your union bargains with the district. Your local negotiating team is made up of dedicated members like you — and benefits from working closely with other FEA unions and FEA bargaining specialists throughout the year to negotiate a contract that promotes and protects excellence in our public schools.

Organizing for the schools our students deserve

Our students are at the center of everything we do. Your local union and FEA fight for adequate funding, proper staffing and the resources educators need to unlock and inspire each child's natural curiosity, imagination and love of learning.

FEA leaders and staff work with local unions to build member capacity, leadership and, most importantly, power to demand and work for the schools our students deserve.

Locals and members from across the state are participating in FEA's Fund Our Future campaign (*see page 4*) and building local power through member-to-member organizing (*see page 7*).



Member advocacy and representation

Every day, members work together to solve problems and address workplace issues big and small. FEA also protects your employment rights with both emergency and long-term legal services should you ever need them. Members can access the best and most comprehensive free legal program of any professional association in the state:

- **Legal Services Programs:** FEA provides legal services to members in employment-related legal matters — including representation in certification actions brought by the Department of Education — in accordance with the Unified Legal Services Program (ULSP) guidelines.

(Above) Nearly 1,000 teachers, education staff professionals, parents, clergy, politicians and community members attended the “Bringing Voices Together: An Education Summit for Florida’s Public Schools” on May 18 in Orlando.



Solidarity in action:
When Florida's Gulf Coast communities and schools were ravaged by Hurricane Michael FEA members from across the state donated money and time to help affected students, families and colleagues.

► **Educators Employment Liability (EEL) Policy:**

The EEL policy provides insurance coverage for members for incidents arising out of their employment. The policy generally provides:

- legal defense costs up to \$3 million per member per occurrence (not including civil rights claims/issues).
- liability coverage up to \$1 million per member per occurrence.
- liability coverage for civil rights claims/issues up to \$300,000 per member per occurrence.

The program also reimburses up to \$1,000 of a bail bond premium and up to \$35,000 in defense costs in criminal proceedings if the member is exonerated or the charge is dropped. If the criminal proceeding is the result of the use of corporal punishment, the reimbursement is made regardless of the outcome.

- **Attorney Referral Program (ARP):** The ARP helps members obtain personal legal services at a reduced cost. Administered through a national network of law firms, the program allows members to receive legal services at rates below their usual fees. Members are entitled to a free, 30-minute initial consultation with an attorney per program year and up to a 30 percent discount for legal work performed in many areas, such as family law, traffic matters, wills and estate planning, and criminal law.

The united voice of educators in Tallahassee

Very few Tallahassee politicians have spent time in front of a classroom, but they want to tell you how to do your job.

FEA members from every corner of the state are committed to the success of every child — and to using their collective voice to demand the resources, class environments and learning opportunities our students need to reach their full potential.

FEA maintains a vigilant presence at the Capitol, employing a team of full-time lobbyists who work with member activists to monitor efforts to influence or change legislation that impact our students and our schools.

We can be certain that our voices — through the Fund Our Future campaign (*see page 4*) — were heard by the Legislature this session. Where schools saw an paltry 47-cent-per-student increase in base funding of for the 2018-2019 budget year, the increase to the base student allocation (BSA) stands at \$75 per student in the 2019-2020 budget. The increased dollars will give districts more money to properly fund schools and salaries.

When laws are passed that hurt our students, schools and educators, we work to stop them from getting in your way — including stopping harmful changes to the Florida Retirement System and filing suit over the discriminatory Best and Brightest bonus program in 2017 and, in 2019, negotiating a settlement for minority teachers unfairly denied the bonuses in the 2015-16 through 2018-19 school years. Florida's newest voucher program — the "Family Empowerment" vouch-



er which could funnel nearly \$1 billion from our public schools to unaccountable private and religious schools— also faces a court challenge.

Spreading the word

Your local union and FEA work to educate the public about the consistently good work of public school employees through media relations, press contacts, television and radio advertising, special events and other public relations activities. Through our newly redesigned website (FEAweb.org), social media platforms, action alert email and text systems, and magazine (*The Advocate*) and year-round media outreach, FEA warns the public when politicians in Tallahassee are harming public schools with their policies.

A statewide commitment

In addition to the programs and services above, our FEA departments work daily with members and local unions throughout the state.

- **Public Policy & Advocacy:** FEA's legislative specialists work to promote and pass good education policy — and defeat harmful legislation. PPA works with members statewide to elect pro-public education representatives.
- **Organizing & Field Services:** Local, regional and state staff work with local unions to bargain contracts, represent members, develop leadership, promote member benefits, recruit new members and build power.
- **Legal Services:** Provides members with a full range of emergency and long-term legal services. FEA's in-house attorneys help with everything from disciplinary actions to certification, retirement and disability disputes.
- **Information Technology:** Provides support and guidance to more than 400 users statewide.
- **Human Resources:** Helps assure that the highest quality employees represent you locally and in Tallahassee.

- **Financial Services:** Our financial services staff ensure that FEA acts as a faithful steward of your hard-earned dues dollars.

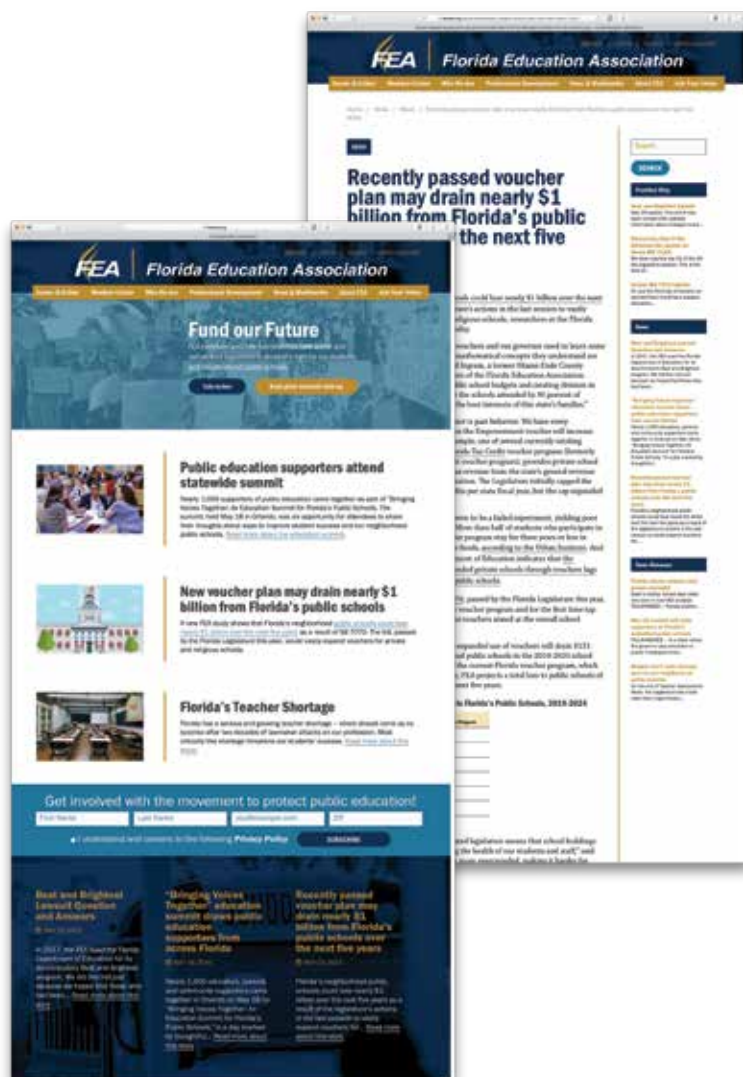
- **Communications:** Our staff produce materials and work with national, state and local unions and media outlets to shine a light on the work of our members in and outside the classroom.

Be sure to check out FEA's Frontline Blog before, during and after the legislative session. The blog helps local leaders, members and education activists stay up-to-date on what's happening in public education and how policy changes could affect our students and our neighborhood public schools.



www.feaweb.org

FEA's website has been redeveloped and redesigned — including for use on mobile devices. FEAweb.org is your source for news and resources to help you in your profession and in your union work.



Your Profession

Education isn't just a job — it's a calling. Our members strive to connect with each child to discover his passions and unlock her potential. Your local, state and national unions offer resources for you to use in developing your craft.



A commitment to excellence

Your local union and the Florida Education Association are led by passionate and devoted public school teachers and education staff professionals.

As professional educators we demand the most of ourselves, our colleagues and our profession. Your membership means taking ownership of your profession and having a voice in the decisions that affect your career.



Professional development

Our members care deeply about the students and public schools they serve. The FEA, AFT and NEA are, in turn, dedicated to the professional development, growth and support of



those who serve Florida's students every day.

We know that you are constantly looking for new ideas and innovative ways to improve your craft. FEA and your local union are committed to providing meaningful and relevant trainings, continuing education and professional development opportunities year-round.

Over the next few pages are just a few of the local, state and national programs designed to help you better serve your students.



[www.feaweb.org/
professional-development](http://www.feaweb.org/professional-development)

FEA's new-and-improved website has additional and routinely updated resources and links for professional development, improving professional practice and certification.



FEA LEADS supports early career teachers, builds leadership skills and increases teacher retention by providing support and training to local teacher leaders. The FEA LEADS fall Teacher Leadership Conference focuses on developing innovative school-based solutions to address teacher retention and leadership. The summer teacher academy aims to build local capacity for supporting early career teachers.

Florida's teacher retention rates are among the lowest in the country. FEA's professional development initiatives are focused on new teachers to help improve their teaching skills so they can be more effective and stay in the state and profession.

Member trainers also now offer cultural competency courses through local union programs and in conjunction with school districts.

The Putnam Pilot Project takes a comprehensive approach to help Priority Schools with a four-point plan to: support strong leadership; ensure effective teaching and learning; strengthen the instructional program; and use data to improve instruction.



FEA's Summer Academy is a week-long training session geared toward new, emerging and seasoned local union

leaders — combined with professional development workshops for rank-and-file educators.

 www.feaweb.org




Built by educators across the country, AFT's **Share My Lesson** brings together a community of teachers, paraprofessionals and school-related personnel to provide high-quality and effective lessons, useful information to use in the classroom and professional development. Share My Lesson has more than 1 million members and more than 400,000 resources that have been downloaded more than 12 million times.

 www.sharemylesson.com



The **NEA Foundation** provides educators — both teachers and education staff professionals — with grants, support and collaboration opportunities to enhance teaching, learning and our schools.

 www.neafoundation.org

Keeping your professional records up-to-date

For both education staff professionals and teachers, maintaining your own up-to-date personal and professional records is every bit as important as keeping lesson plans or work assignments organized. Having the appropriate documentation on hand can be critical to placement on the salary schedule, clearing up misunderstandings, making sure your evaluation is fair and accurate, etc. Proper written documentation can help keep a problem from becoming serious or being a problem at all. Suggested documents to keep in this folder:

- ▶ A copy of the current collective bargaining agreement.
- ▶ Contact information for your local union and building representative.
- ▶ Copies of your personal employment contracts.
- ▶ Copies of any supplemental contracts, if applicable.
- ▶ Retirement records and correspondence.
- ▶ Certificates, licenses, diplomas, etc.
- ▶ Records of in-services, college credits, continuing education courses, etc.
- ▶ All observations and evaluations and your conference notes, responses or comments.
- ▶ Proof of association membership.
- ▶ Proof of college attendance, dates and degrees.
- ▶ Record of accumulated sick leave, personal leave and/or vacation days.
- ▶ Record of commendations, awards and honors.
- ▶ Copies of current and past work and/or teaching schedules.
- ▶ Records of incidents involving student discipline, violence or other disruptive behavior.
- ▶ Copies of letters and memos to and from administrators.
- ▶ Copies of letters and memos to and from parents and colleagues.
- ▶ Copies of all documents in your district-maintained personnel file.
- ▶ Copies of your Individual Professional Development Plan.

Resources for teachers and education staff professionals

Your union membership allows you to network with and learn from more than 4 million educators across the country. Below are some of the resources available for teachers and education staff professionals¹ from your state and national unions to help you advance and grow professionally.


AFT's PSRP Reporter E

PSRP Reporter is the national publication of AFT paraprofessionals and school-related personnel. Previously available in print, the now online-only publication covers a wide range of professional topics of concern for education staff professionals.

 actionnetwork.org/forms/aft-psrp-reporter

AFT TEACH (Together Educating America's Children) Conference E T

AFT's biannual conference offers a wide range of high-quality professional development opportunities and showcases the groundbreaking work taking place in local and state affiliates throughout the AFT.


 www.aft.org/our-news/calendar

¹ Please note: Each union uses a different term to refer to the wide range of paraprofessionals and non-instructional staff who work at public schools: FEA uses the term education staff professionals, NEA uses education support professionals and AFT uses "PSRP" or paraprofessionals and school-related personnel.

Anti-bullying resources E T

Both of our national unions, AFT and NEA, have launched anti-bullying campaigns and have a number of resources focused specifically on the role of education staff professionals in the fight against bullying.

 www.aft.org/bully

 www.nea.org/home/neabullyfree.html

English Language Learners E T

Colorín Colorado is the premier national website serving educators and families of English language learners (ELLs) in Grades PreK-12.

 www.colorincolorado.org/

FEA Teacher Evaluation Log Book T

This booklet, originally developed by the Polk Education Association and adapted by FEA for statewide use, was created to assist teachers in managing the state-mandated changes to the instructional evaluation system.

To request your copy of the log book, please email: advocate@floridaea.org.


NEA edCommunities E T


NEA's edCommunities is a free platform where teachers, parents, education staff professionals and community members share ideas and resources to improve student success.

 www.mynea360.org

National education staff professional conferences E

AFT and NEA also each host annual conferences for education staff professionals. The 2020 NEA ESP Conference will be held March 20-22; the 2019 AFT PSRP Conference is TBA.

 www.nea.org/grants/31430.htm

 www.aft.org/our-news/calendar

NEA Education Support Professionals online resource hub E

The hub offers an expansive collection of online resources, articles, websites and career information compiled by the NEA ESP Quality Department and sorted by job classification.

 www.nea.org/espresources

 www.feaweb.org/professional-development/certification/

FEA's website has updated information about certification, including the ParaPro Assessment and recent significant fee reductions – *more than \$100 in some cases* – for many teacher certification tests. This was a change that FEA members had long advocated for.

The Educational Village | When we talk about the “we” of the Florida Education Association, who is that exactly?

The media often call FEA the “statewide teachers’ union,” and that’s partly right. In truth, we reflect the great educational village, and we are 145,000 strong.

Students stand at the heart of our village, surrounded by all the people that it takes to see that these children and young adults are educated, fed, transported and generally helped along the pathway to becoming successful, happy grownups.

In your district and in counties throughout Florida, at schools small and large, at colleges and universities, our members do practically every type of non-administrative job necessary for the functioning of pre-K-12 public schools and the state’s public institutions of higher education.

Our membership also includes people who used to do those jobs and still care deeply about public education — retired education staff professionals, teachers and higher education faculty — and young people at our colleges and universities who are studying to teach.

In Florida’s pre-K-12 public schools, we are education staff professionals:

- Bus drivers
- Paraprofessionals and teacher’s aides
- Licensed practical nurses (LPNs)
- Custodians
- Maintenance workers
- Food service workers
- Secretaries
- Technical employees
- Information technology (IT) workers

And we are teachers and other instructional staff:

- Guidance counselors
- Speech-language pathologists
- Occupational therapists
- Instructional coaches
- Registered nurses (RNs)

In Florida’s public colleges and universities, we are faculty members and graduate and research assistants.

The students who depend on public education need us all — along with parents, faith leaders and other community members who support our public schools.

As we build new relationships in support of our students and public schools, it is important that people in our communities and the media know who we are and what we do. We are a multifaceted group that puts students at the center of everything we do — all together, we are the FEA.

As an education staff professional said during an FEA tele-town hall conference call in June, “It takes many parts to make a whole.”



Your Rights and Responsibilities

Most education employees go through their entire careers without facing disciplinary action. Nevertheless it is important to know and be familiar with your rights should you or your co-workers need to exercise them.

Be prepared: Know your rights

Being called into a meeting with your supervisor or an administrator can seem daunting. It's important to stay calm and remember your right to representation, also known as your **"Weingarten Rights"**:

- 1. REMEMBER:** If a reasonable person would believe that discipline could result from the meeting, you have the right to representation.
- 2. ASK:** "What is the purpose of the meeting?" Could discipline result from the meeting? If so...
- 3. STATE:** "I want union representation." You can ask for representation at anytime during the meeting.

DO NOT be insubordinate if denied representation.

- ▶ Attend the meeting.
- ▶ Keep asking for union representation.
- ▶ Take good notes.

DO NOT sign or agree to anything.

DO NOT make or write statements.

CALL your local union office or service unit immediately for assistance.

In addition to the resources listed on the following pages, members may have additional rights spelled out in the collective bargaining agreement between their local union and school district.

Do's and don'ts when facing possible disciplinary action

1. **DO** remain calm.
2. **DO** contact your local union or service unit office.
3. **DO** keep notes.
4. **DON'T** make statements if you can avoid it without being insubordinate.
5. **DON'T** attend meetings without representation.
6. **DO** get preliminary details.
7. **DON'T** agree to a change in job status.
8. **DO** retain letters, documents, notes, etc. on the matter.

How to avoid trouble — and what to do if you don't

Although it is unfortunate, it is a fact that the very nature of your job leaves you open to serious allegations of misconduct, ranging from inappropriate discipline to excessive use of force to sexual misconduct to misappropriation of funds to falsifying records and everything else in between.

While it is impossible to stop allegations from being made against you, there are steps that you can take to protect yourself, your reputation and your career. It is important to note that teachers are not the only employees in a

school district who are open to allegations of misconduct. Bus drivers, teacher assistants, food service workers, custodians, secretaries and other education staff professionals are just as likely to be charged as teachers.

By following these simple tips, you can help protect yourself from allegations being made against you.

- ▶ Never touch a child in anger. Avoid any contact that can be perceived as grabbing, pushing, shoving, pinching, twisting or hitting.

- ▶ Avoid being alone with a student, particularly one of the opposite sex. Try to have another student or adult present. If this is not possible, be sure to leave the door open and, if at all possible, move to an open location such as a media center.
- ▶ Do not give a student a ride in your personal vehicle.
- ▶ Do not send cards, personal letters or e-mails to students.

» continued next page

- ▶ Do not give gifts to students.
- ▶ Do not discuss your personal life with students.
- ▶ Do not become a pal to students. Be sure that it is clearly understood that you are the adult, and maintain a professional relationship with students.
- ▶ Do not engage in conversations with students about their dates, romantic problems or sex. If a student needs help, refer him or her to a guidance counselor.
- ▶ Do not let students sit on your lap.
- ▶ Avoid hugging students. If a student wants to hug you, try to do so standing side by side.
- ▶ Don't ask students to give you back rubs.
- ▶ Never drink alcohol in front of students or on a school-sponsored trip, even if students are not present.
- ▶ If you handle money, be sure to follow school and district

policy regarding accounting, receipt and deposit procedures.

- ▶ Do not make sexist remarks to students or adults, and do not tell off-color jokes.
- ▶ Do not use profanity, even when there are no students around. Not only is it inappropriate in the workplace, but it may also be offensive to others who can hear you.
- ▶ Keep careful and accurate records. This includes student records, inventory records, financial records or any documentation for which you are responsible.
- ▶ Arrive at work on time or a few minutes early. Don't leave before the end of the workday without permission.

- ▶ If you receive money from the district as a uniform allowance, be sure you wear the correct uniform.

Remember, if you are called into your supervisor's office for a meeting that could be disciplinary in nature, you have the right to union representation.

You should ask to have the meeting rescheduled at a time when your representative can be present. Then call the union office immediately and ask for help.

If you are the subject of an investigation and are asked to give a statement, you should tell the investigator that you will cooperate but, before giving a written or oral statement, you would like to consult with your union representative. Then call the union office immediately and ask for assistance.



www.feaweb.org/member-center/legal-services/

Through FEA's Legal Services Program members can access the best and most comprehensive free legal program of any professional association in the state — covering every aspect of their personal, professional and organizational lives.

Online do's and don'ts for educators

While our lives are increasingly shared online, recent disciplinary trends in Florida indicate that all public school employees need to be cautious about internet communications, particularly if using an employer owned system. Educators should exercise caution to protect their careers.

When using Facebook or other social media platforms members should:

- ▶ Utilize the most secure privacy settings and check those settings often.
- ▶ Use a profile picture they would be proud to see on a billboard in their community.
- ▶ Use common sense when posting photos.
- ▶ Only "friend" people who they actually know and consider to be friends. Never "friend" colleagues who are not their friends outside of work.
- ▶ Never "friend" students.
- ▶ Never "friend" the parents of students.
- ▶ Never post comments or status updates related to their work — including general comments.



- ▶ Because educators in Florida are held to a higher standard of conduct in both their personal and professional lives, what might be acceptable in private industry may not be appropriate for public school employees.

Some reminders about who should see your blog or social media:

- ▶ Limit access to your blog or web page using a “friends only” or similar type of restrictive setting.
- ▶ If visitors post to your blog or web page, monitor postings constantly and remove anything that is inappropriate or even gives the appearance of inappropriate conduct.

When and where you go online is also important:

- ▶ Check to see if your employer has any policies regarding blogging or web pages. If so, you should review the policy with your local officers or staff.
- ▶ Computer experts can determine all internet sites accessed from your computer, the date and time of day, the length of time on the site, along with frequency of access. School employees have been disciplined not only for accessing inappropriate sites but for accessing such sites during work hours and for using school computers to access inappropriate sites at home.
- ▶ Know your Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and follow it. Your employer can discipline you for failure to follow the policy. If possible, do not use the school board’s computer system for anything other than school-related matters. Even opening your private email may cause problems.
- ▶ Email messages made or received by agency employees in connection with official business are public records and subject to disclosures under Florida law. There is no exemption for so-called “personal” email on public computers, but private email stored in government owned computers does not automatically become public record just because of that storage.
- ▶ Keep your passwords private. Don’t share with

students or colleagues and change them often. Remember to log off or lock your computer if you leave your work station.

- ▶ Assume that you have no privacy regarding any email you send or receive on any system owned by your employer, especially if the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) states that the employer has the right to search. Send only emails that you would feel comfortable having your mother read on the front page of your local paper!

A few reminders about your online content:

- ▶ Do not blog or post about your job duties, colleagues, supervisor or students to minimize the possibility of disclosing confidential information, sharing information about a private workplace complaint, or otherwise carelessly or unintentionally engaging in speech that could affect your employment.
- ▶ If you post or blog as a citizen about a non-job related matter of public concern (elections, environmental issues, etc.) be careful that your comments do not negatively affect your employer’s effectiveness or efficiency or otherwise disrupt the workplace.
- ▶ Even if you are posting or blogging about innocuous information (i.e. your favorite football team or family genealogy), you still must be careful not to make statements that might harm your employer or interfere with your ability to carry out your job duties.
- ▶ Do not post or blog about personal subjects (i.e. dating, romance, or drug or alcohol use). Your blog or web page should not contain any references to sexual subjects, or contain vulgar or profane language or graphics. If your blog or web page was a movie, it should be rated “G.”
- ▶ Blogging and posting anonymously does not protect you. The names of bloggers, web page authors and other internet users can be discovered through litigation.

WARNING: Testing violations can end your career

The DOE is cracking down on alleged violations of testing procedures. Even simple mistakes are costing teachers their careers.

Tests you give

Alleged violations have included: giving too much testing time to students; improper accommodations for ESE students; unauthorized accommodations for students with perceived special needs; encouraging students to use the strategies learned in class; and saying anything to students that is not included in the script.

It's important to follow all of the testing rules — and to ask if you do not understand. Never assume. Even the appearance of a violation can prompt an investigation and potentially stiff sanctions, often including up to two years suspension of your certificates.

FEA has published guidance to help members avoid testing and other violations: Ask your local union for a copy.

Tests you take

When you enroll in your course or before you take an examination, you are required to sign a non-plagiarism oath — you may remember clicking “Agree” on the Academic Integrity Statement preceding an exam. That statement says “that by participating in this course I will be responsible for ensuring non-plagiarism or copying of another participant’s assignments/work and submitting it as my own.”

Yet, you probably had no idea that working on assignments with a partner and submitting your assignments as a team would be considered plagiarism or collusion.

By nature our work is collaborative and we do our best work when we work together. ***But in this case it can be a career-ender.***

Plagiarism is defined as the act of “stealing and passing off the ideas or words of another as one’s own,” “using another’s created production without crediting the source,” or “presenting as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.”

Teachers are being charged with collusion or plagiarism when they work on an assignment with a partner and they both turn in that assignment — even if only a small number of words or ideas are the same.

Each exam is cross referenced with computer software to all other takers including those from previous years, as well as internet sources. If the work is deemed insufficiently original and individual, teachers are being charged with plagiarism by DOE are having their certificates suspended for not less than 12 months, among other penalties.

What can you do?

DO NOT work with a partner on your assignments.

DO NOT use responses from previous years.

DO NOT copy and paste material from the internet.

If you have any additional questions please contact your local union or the FEA Legal Department at (888) 522-4912.



www.feaweb.org/member-center

The Member Center on FEA's new website is updated regularly with new resources, events and information you need to know as a public school employee.

This legal advisory was originally provided to FEA members during the 2016-17 school year as a 10 Minute Meeting.

10 Minute Meetings are provided throughout the school year on issues of concern to FEA members.

Your Benefits

Educators spend their own money on materials, classroom decorations and supplies. To help you save money, FEA, AFT and NEA have partnered with merchants you know and trust to provide discounts year-round.

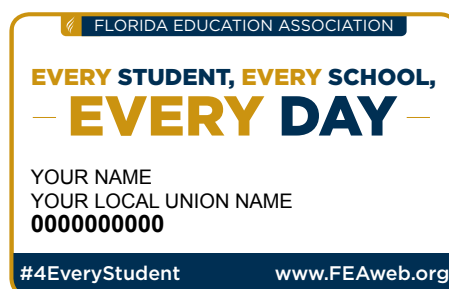
These programs are a part of our commitment to helping our members live the American Dream — by providing members solutions that improve their lives, allowing them to focus on supporting their students.

You do not need to know your FEA/Access membership number to access the national AFT and NEA benefit programs.

Some local unions have begun establishing member benefits ambassadors at school sites in their district. To learn more about this expanding program, existing benefits (such as free college, travel discounts, debt counseling, home mortgage, and more), and limited-time offers, follow FEA member benefits on Facebook. All registration information is located on the Facebook cover page.



www.facebook.com/FEAMemberBenefits



The FEA/Access program delivers savings of up to 50% off at more than 350,000 premier shops, restaurants, hotels, retailers and more — across the country and even right in your own neighborhood!

Once your local union membership has been processed, you will receive this card with your membership number and an initial password (which you can change) in the mail.

Use the MyDeals app (see sidebar, next page) or log in to www.FEAweb.org, and click on the Access link to search for a participating merchant by entering the city or ZIP Code where you are — or plan to be.



www.feaweb.org/member-center/member-benefits/



www.FEAweb.org/login

(Note: The new FEA website requires all members to create a password in order to access the member-only portions of the site.)





A Union of Professionals

Saving money with your member benefits is now even easier with the MyDeals and Union Plus mobile apps, available on either the Google Play or iTunes App stores.



The **FEA MyDeals app** gives you show-your-phone discounts at 250,000 places. You also get GPS searching and mapping, national chains and local favorites, and the ability to track your savings.



The **Abenity Union Plus** mobile app lets you take many of your nationwide AFT Member Benefits on the go.

Many of AFT's member benefits can be accessed via the Union Plus app (see sidebar). Some of the most popular are:

- ▶ New members can sign up for one year of \$5,000 of no-cost term life insurance coverage at: **www.aftbenefits.org/freeterm**
- ▶ Relocation services including vetted, pre-approved realtors, mortgage cash back incentives and discounts on storage systems and moving trucks.
- ▶ A robust auto club program, with household coverage for only \$29, after gas rebate.

 **www.aft.org/benefits**



Build a better life with NEA Member Benefits. Our programs and services deliver the recognition you deserve.

- ▶ New members can get \$15,000 of no-cost life insurance for one year at **neamb.com/complife**. All members can enroll for an additional comp life insurance policy.
- ▶ The NEA® Retirement Program helps you manage your retirement savings and income needs. Visit **neamb.com/retire**.
- ▶ The NEA® Auto & Home Insurance Program provided by California Casualty offers coverage designed for educators. Drivers who switch save an average of \$443 a year.

 **www.neamb.com**



NTA Life is dedicated to Protecting the Heart of Our Community. That means we're focused on serving the very people that serve our communities: educators, emergency responders, and government employees. Our products and services are tailored to fit the needs of these professionals.

With more than 40 years of experience serving our nation's educators, we've become skilled at refining our offerings in order to provide the best benefits and support for an educator's lifestyle. We're proud to serve teachers and we look forward to doing so well into the future.

 **www.NTALife.com**



Creative Benefits for Educators — owned by locals of the Florida Education Association — provides quality, 'best in class' members-only products and services through our partner companies.


AIG Retirement Services (VALIC): Complimentary Members Advantage Plan, a comprehensive, personal financial road map.

Liberty Mutual: Educators Plus auto insurance program features benefits and savings specially designed for members.

American Fidelity: Members onsite enrollments and customized benefits through supplemental insurance.

LoansAtWork: Fast, emergency loans help members responsibly manage emergency expenses.

H & R Block: Professional tax planning, tools, discounts and personalized services assist and inform members.

 **www.cbeducators.com**

Your Future

The end of each school year carries with it a mix of emotions: joy, relief, accomplishment. Some educators may also be facing new beginnings. Your local union and FEA are ready to help with the next phase of your personal and professional journey.

If you have questions about the material in the guide or if you need additional information, please feel free to call your local president or staff.

In order to maintain your NEA insurance after you retire, you must become a member of FEA-Retired.

Pre-retired lifetime memberships are also available for educators nearing retirement.

The FEA Survival Guide for Non-Renewals, Layoffs and Retirement

Any time someone is informed that their contract won't be renewed, it exacts an emotional toll. Therefore FEA, in conjunction with your local association, has prepared a resource in the event that you find yourself in this difficult and overwhelming position: ***The FEA Survival Guide for Non-Renewals, Layoffs and Retirement.***

This comprehensive guide outlines a number of steps you can take to ensure that you will receive all the benefits due to you from both the school district and the state.

FEA-Retired: A continued commitment

Are you retiring or considering retirement? If so, FEA-Retired (FEA-R) is the official statewide organization of Florida's retired education employees.

With more than 28 local chapters and nearly 4,000 members, FEA-R works to improve and strengthen the programs that affect retired educators: retirement benefits, Medicare and Social Security. Your FEA-R membership allows you to:

- ▶ Stay connected with fellow National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers members and programs
- ▶ Engage in opportunities to share your expertise by volunteering and mentoring

- ▶ Benefit from NEA's and AFT's political and legislative efforts to protect your retirement resources
- ▶ Stay informed through subscriptions to: *This Active Life*, *AFT Education*, the FEA Retired newsletter and *The Advocate*

FEA-R members maintain their involvement in education through mentoring, volunteering, grant-making, mobilization and speaking out about education issues. FEA-R also works with active members to prepare for their retirement.

You've dedicated your professional life to public education. FEA-R is the best way for you to continue your commitment after you stop working. For more information on FEA-Retired, visit:

 www.feaweb.org/fea-retired

Tackling student debt

Both of FEA's national affiliates, AFT and NEA, have campaigns to address the student loan debt crisis affecting their members.

While these campaigns educate members about and promote federal programs, please note that federal government regulations governing these programs may change in the future.

 www.forgivemystudentdebt.org

 www.nea.org/degreesnotdebt

WHY POLITICS MATTER | Everything that the Legislature has done to public education over the past 20 years can be undone through electoral work, political participation and member organizing.

Every student deserves the opportunity to attend a well-resourced, fully-staffed neighborhood public school. An education system that values students as human beings, not as data points, will ensure universal access to the arts and certified media specialists at every school.



Volusia United Educators member Andrea Cochran testifies before the Senate Education Committee during the 2019 Legislative Session. Cochran was one of more than 100 FEA members to come to Tallahassee during session to speak out for public education students.

In order for every student to receive the education they deserve, there must be some significant changes in the Legislature. This is why it is incumbent upon each of the 145,000 members of the Florida Education Association to engage directly with their elected officials and to hold them accountable for their votes on public education.

Here are some critical opportunities to speak out on behalf of your students, schools and profession:

★ **2020 Legislative Session:** We were thrilled to see so many FEA members come up to Tallahassee this past legislative session to fight for students and public education. We are hoping to see even more educators come up for the 2020 session, which starts earlier than usual:

**2020 Florida Legislative Session
January 14 to March 13, 2020**

However, you don't have to come up to Tallahassee and you most definitely shouldn't wait until January to contact your legislator. The first committee week starts on September 16. It is important that your legislator hear from you — the experts on public education — by then. And then they must continue to hear from you throughout the committee weeks and during the session.

Contact your local union president to see how you can become involved.

★ **Critical 2020 elections:** Elections matter from the schoolhouse to the state house to the White House.

The good news? FEA members vote at a higher rate than the average Floridian. The even better news? Parents and voters trust what teachers and education staff professionals say is best for our public schools. They know that educators, not politicians, should be making classroom decisions to ensure student success. This school year there is another important election:

**Presidential Primary Election
March 17, 2020**



www.feaweb.org/member-center/voter-toolkit

To avoid problems at the polls, FEA urges all union members to regularly check and update their voter status before each of the 2020 election dates:

- ▶ Presidential Primary Election
March 17, 2020
- ▶ Primary, August 25, 2020 (*Primaries are when most school board races are decided*)
- ▶ Presidential Election
November 3, 2020

These and other resources are part of our year-round, online Voter Toolkit.

FEA spotlight

potential